

Relationship of Water Preserve Area Feasibility Study
and the Lower East Coast 2020 Plan
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Over the years, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has investigated numerous alternatives for the Water Preserve Areas (WPA). These range from a continuous Everglades buffer, consisting of an interconnected system of marshlands (when proposed by the National Audubon Society as Water Supply Preserves) to individual “cells” that were combined to form wetland areas, reservoirs, and aquifer recharge basins or commonly called the East Coast Buffer. This concept was originally analyzed in the Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply planning process and led to a decision by the SFWMD to begin buying East Coast Buffer Land in 1994. In 1994, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers endorsed the East Coast Buffer concept as “Water Preserve Areas”.

In July 1995, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed and the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board approved the Water Preserve Area Feasibility Study. The SFWMD continued investigation of the WPAs through the “WPA Land Suitability Analysis” and the Interim Plan for Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply. The LEC Interim Plan considered two specific areas of the WPAs, Site 1 and the Central Palm Beach Storage. The decision to limit the final LEC model run to two sites was largely due to the uncertainty of design for the remainder of the WPA system. There was also uncertainty concerning what portions of the WPAs might be on-line by 2010, which was the original planning horizon for the Interim Plan. It now appears that many of the projects under consideration by the WPA Feasibility Study, excluding the Lakebelt in Miami-Dade County, could be constructed by 2020, the new planning horizon for the LEC Plan.

During 1997 and 1998, the Central and Southern Florida Project Comprehensive Review Study (Restudy) furthered the investigation of how the Water Preserve Areas could benefit regional water management by modeling alternative designs and operations. The Restudy Team produced its Draft Comprehensive Plan, released July, 1999, which resulted in initial designs for the three-county Water Preserve Area among many other projects. These designs will be run in high resolution ground water models for further refinement during the Water Preserve Area Feasibility Study alternative design cycle. This phase of the study will continue through 1999 and run concurrently with the LEC 2020 Plan.

The Water Preserve Areas will be an integral link to water management between the Water Conservation Areas, the urban areas to the east and within the urban areas themselves. These areas will store, cleanse and move water from different parts of the regional and local systems. Due to their central role in water management in the Lower East Coast, the LEC 2020 Plan needs to incorporate WPA designs, and thus their benefits, into the LEC planning process. This will be accomplished by incorporating the Water Preserve Area components expected

to be in-place by the year 2020 into the LEC 2020 Plan alternative design and analysis. As the WPA component designs evolve through the alternative design process, they will be incorporated into the LEC 2020 Plan alternatives. Additionally, as the water development projects and utility withdrawals are revised in the LEC 2020 Plan alternative design cycle, they will be incorporated into the WPA alternatives.